

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Herger today voted against a legislative package (H.R. 3221 and H.R. 2776) championed by Democrat leaders in the House because it would fail to reduce America's dependence on foreign sources of oil and not address record high gasoline prices. Congressman Herger spoke in opposition to the tax title of the legislation (H.R. 2776) when it was debated on the floor. The Congressman also issued the following statement:

"I'm deeply disappointed the majority party would bring an energy bill to the floor that does nothing to reduce our reliance on foreign oil or address the record high gas prices we saw this past summer," Herger stated. "Instead, the legislation introduced today includes new federal mandates and a roughly \$15 billion tax increase on U.S. companies that produce energy for America. Increased regulations and higher taxes will do nothing to increase domestic energy production and will only mean higher prices for consumers. This is precisely the wrong energy policy for our nation.

"Our nation's energy policy is critical to our national security," continued Herger. "During our 1973 energy crisis, we imported approximately one-third of our oil from abroad. Today, that number is twice as high. Much of the world's oil resources come from volatile regions and countries, led by dangerous dictators. Developing energy resources here at home can help reduce this reliance on foreign oil. And importantly, we have the technology to do so in an environmentally responsible way.

Herger concluded, "To get serious about addressing this major challenge, Congress must permit targeted and environmentally safe domestic energy exploration and streamline government red tape that impedes the expansion of American refining capacity. We must also continue to promote energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources such as hydroelectricity, forest biomass, and geothermal. House Republicans developed an amendment to do this but were denied the opportunity to offer it during floor debate."

The text of Herger's prepared remarks on the House floor follows:

Mr. Speaker, every time I visit with constituents, like most here in Congress, I hear about high gas prices. And they're right. Gas prices are too high.

Prices in our free market are governed by supply and demand. Record high prices result from -

among other things - the fact that we don't produce enough of our own supply domestically, and are therefore at the mercy of unpredictable and often unstable foreign producers.

Thirty years ago when we had our first oil crisis we were dependent on foreign sources of oil for only about one-third of our supplies. Today it's roughly two-thirds.

A sure way to fix this situation is to encourage environmentally safe oil exploration and production in the U.S. But this is the opposite of what today's legislation seeks.

In fact, today's bill proposes to raise taxes on domestic oil and gas exploration by nearly \$12 billion, discouraging investment in U.S. supplies which will, over time, increase our dependence on foreign sources of fossil fuels.

I encourage my colleagues to vote against higher gas prices and against H.R. 2776.